DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 242 812 UD 023 441

AUTHOR McKay, Emily G.
TITLE Recent Hispanic Polls: A Summary of Results.
INSTITUTION National Council of La Raza, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Feb 84
NOTE 12p.; Published by the Hispanic Policy Development Project.
PUB TYPE Reports - General (140)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitudes; *Hispanic Americans; *Language Attitudes; *Political Issues; *Social Problems; *Surveys
IDENTIFIERS *Media Use; *Opinion Polls

ABSTRACT

Summarized in this document are findings from several recent surveys of Hispanic Americans. Each of the surveys had a different purpose and their samples were extremely varied. None had a sample design which would allow results to be generalized to reflect the attitudes or characteristics of the overall U.S. Hispanic population. Each, however, provides valuable insights into certain segments of the Hispanic community. The report summarizes survey findings about (1) education, employment, voter participation, and other issues and problems considered by respondents to be of importance to their community or to Hispanics nationwide; (2) language use and media habits; and (3) entities and institutions which might serve the needs of Hispanics. A full list of the surveys reviewed is appended. (CMG)

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RECENT HISPANIC POLLS: A SUMMARY OF RESULTS

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Published by

The Hispanic Policy Development Project

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February 1984

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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Introduction

HISPANICS have lived in what is now the United States for over 400 years, and they are a large and growing segment of our population. Despite this reality, only limited empirical data are available regarding Hispanic attitudes on major issues which affect their lives.

In the last few years, a few initiatives have been taken to survey this community. These limited opinion polls are giving us some important baseline information for measuring changes in the future.

The practical utility of this information is truly impressive, so much so that one wonders why so little has been done in determining Hispanic attitudes. An understanding of Hispanic language preferences, for example, will help determine the best way to market to a population that has a purchasing power conservatively estimated at over $70 billion a year. Hispanic views on national political issues could well determine who will reside in the White House after the 1984 election.

Because so little Hispanic polling has been done, there is sometimes a tendency for users to go beyond the data and not realize the limitations of the surveys. Various segments of the Hispanic community have somewhat different perspectives on certain issues. As expected, surveys of Hispanic communities tend to be influenced to some degree by geography, income, and occupational status. Attitudes also vary by ethnic subgroup, and by the length of time Hispanics have lived in this country; thus Hispanics whose ancestors lived in the Southwest before it became a part of the United States often have viewpoints which differ from those of new arrivals. Thus while there is considerable agreement on many issues, Hispanics are indeed a heterogeneous population. This diversity is demonstrated in the varying responses to certain questions which are reported by surveys carried out in different regions or with dissimilar target groups.

The studies summarized in the following presentation are by no means the only ones available. Indeed, this brief summary is not meant to be definitive or exhaustive. What we have attempted to do is to condense and present simply some of the findings of the more recent, the more reliable, and/or the more interesting polls that have come to our attention.

Raul Yzaguirre
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1.
Surveys of Hispanics

American public opinion polls traditionally have included too few Hispanics to permit separate presentation of data from Hispanic subsamples. In the past few years, however, a number of Hispanic-focused surveys have been conducted. A few have been national polls which deliberately have included large Hispanic subsamples because they focused on issues such as immigration. Others—such as several voter participation surveys conducted by or for the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project, and the recent survey of elected and appointed Hispanic officials carried out for the Hispanic Policy Development Project—have included only Hispanics.

While the polls differ greatly in their purposes, scope, sampling method, and representativeness, they do offer useful information about Hispanic attitudes, issue priorities and perceptions, and consumer behavior. The information in this document summarizes findings from several of these surveys. All the surveys which were reviewed are listed in the **Sources** appendix; the following were used most extensively:

- Several surveys have been conducted by or for the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project (SVREP); we especially have used surveys, conducted between November 1981 and January 1982, of 903 adults in East Los Angeles and San Antonio. Results from these surveys in some cases are compared with data from the 1979 Chicano Survey conducted by the National Chicano Research Network at the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan. SVREP also has conducted or supported surveys in Denver, Chicago, and the Rio Grande Valley. These surveys focus on voter attitudes and demographic information needed for voter participation efforts.

- Yankelovich, Skelly & White conducted a Hispanic market study, "Spanish USA," in early 1981 for the Spanish International Network (SIN). This survey included 646 interviews of approximately equal numbers of Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans, and other Hispanics; results later were weighted statistically to correspond to each group's percentage of the U.S. population. This survey focused on consumer habits and media use, with strong emphasis on Spanish-language media.

- Some 448 Hispanic elected and appointed officials were surveyed in June and July 1983 by Daniel Yankelovich's Public Agenda Foundation for the Hispanic Policy Development Project (HPDP). Reports from that survey were in preparation when this summary was written; NCLR provided a list of Hispanic officials used for that study, and was given access to preliminary data from the survey. Mexican Americans were overrepresented in the survey because they are more likely than other Hispanics to be elected or appointed officials. The survey emphasized Hispanic attitudes about public policy issues such as political participation, education, and jobs.

- The recent Coca-Cola Hispanic Study was a survey of Hispanic retailers, small business owners/managers, community and opinion leaders in the five largest Hispanic markets: New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Antonio, and Miami. The survey included 500 respondents, and the sample was designed to be representative of each community rather than statistically generalizable; Hispanic business people were deliberately overrepresented. The survey was designed by The Cultural Communications Group of New York, and conducted by the Strategy Research Corporation of Miami. It focused on perceived needs of each community and how they can be met; some brand data were also obtained, but not published. Findings were published in late 1983.

Another major Hispanic study is the 1979 Chicano Survey directed by Carlos Arce at the National Chicano Research Network, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan. This survey, funded by the National Institute of Mental Health, included lengthy face-to-face interviews with 991 Mexican-descent persons living in the Chicago area and in the five Southwestern states of California, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Texas. A probability sample was used, and the survey was carefully constructed and implemented. Preliminary findings from the study were first published in 1981 in the Network's monthly newsletter, **La Red/The Net**. The data have formed the basis for various papers and dissertations, and have been made available for comparison with findings from other studies. This survey is not referenced extensively here because it was conducted in 1979, and this summary focuses on more recent polls.

Each of these surveys had a different purpose, and their samples were extremely varied. None had a sample design which would allow results to be generalized to reflect the attitudes or characteristics of the overall U.S. Hispanic population. For example, the Hispanic Policy Development Project included only Hispanic elected and appointed officials, the Coca-Cola survey was limited to respondents in just five cities, and most of the SVREP surveys were local. The 1979 Chicano Survey included only one Hispanic subgroup. Some of the surveys appear to reflect the priorities of their sponsors or authors, and thus certain of the findings or interpretations must be viewed with caution. Each, however, provides valuable insights into certain segments of the Hispanic community.

2.
Issue Priorities and Perspectives

Key Problems

All the surveys mentioned above, except the SIN study, asked what issues or problems the respondents considered to be of the greatest importance to their community or to Hispanics nationwide. Most often identified were education and employment, but there were great differences across sites and surveys. For example, when asked to identify the single most important problem in the Hispanic community, Hispanic elected and appointed officials (HPDP survey) specified education. When given a list of issues, they were most likely to identify Hispanic unemployment, problems of undocumented workers, inadequate education, and low voting rates as "very serious" problems. Mexican American citizens in East Los Angeles identified crime as the most serious problem facing their community, while those in San Antonio, South Texas, Denver, and Chicago most often identified unemployment (SVREP surveys); Mexican American leaders in South Texas also considered unemployment the most serious local problem. Most Hispanic businesspersons and leaders in the five major Hispanic markets (Coca-Cola survey) said education or employment are the most important needs of the Hispanic community. Housing was identified frequently in the Coca-Cola survey, but was not a listed alternative in the HPDP survey; voter participation was identified less than half as often in the Coca-Cola survey, which included only a small number of elected and appointed officials, and was not listed among the perceived key problems in the SVREP study.

Education

Most surveys of Hispanics have found great concern about education, and also strong support for bilingual education. In the SVREP surveys, bilingual education was considered a good idea by 93 percent of San Antonio Mexican American citizens and 87 percent of East Los Angeles citizens, and by 96 percent of South Texas Mexican American leaders. Hispanic elected and appointed officials expressed similar support; 83 percent agreed that bilingual programs are "essential in helping Hispanic children to learn English and to do better in school." In addition, 73 percent agreed that such programs "will help Hispanic children become more employable," and 78 percent agreed that they "are equally important for Anglo children." Asked about emphasis in bilingual programs, 75 percent agreed that "basic subjects should be taught in English, with supplementary courses in Spanish." In the HPDP study, education was considered particularly important by Puerto Ricans, and Puerto Ricans and Cuban Americans supported bilingual education at a higher rate than Mexican Americans.

When the elected and appointed officials were asked to identify the single greatest obstacle to better education for Hispanics, financial obstacles, problems within the educational system, and lack of parental concern were each named by about one-fifth of the respondents. Asked to rate a list of 14 factors which might contribute to the high Hispanic dropout rate, 40 percent of officials felt that "parents who are uneducated" are a very important factor, and about one-third gave similar ratings to lack of special services for children with serious problems, and lack of encouragement by parents.

One opinion poll has reported somewhat lower rates of support for bilingual education among Hispanics, although the difference may reflect the specific wording of the question. A **Los Angeles Times** poll conducted in March 1983 found only a plurality of 45 percent of Hispanics who believed that bilingual education "helps Spanish-speaking students to learn more quickly."

The SVREP study asked whether the U.S. is spending too little or too much for various types of programs. The majority of respondents in San Antonio (63 percent) and East Los Angeles (59 percent) and the vast majority of Mexican American leaders in South Texas (91 percent) felt "we are spending too little" money on education; similar percentages—65 percent

in San Antonio, 55 percent in East Los Angeles, and 89 percent of South Texas Mexican American leaders—felt too little is being spent on bilingual education.

Employment

Several surveys have investigated various aspects of the employment issue. In the HPDP survey, elected and appointed officials were asked to identify the single greatest obstacle faced by Hispanics in the workplace; 44 percent of respondents felt that lack of education is the primary obstacle, and 23 percent identified discrimination. Another factor considered "very important" by 30 percent of respondents is lack of job skills. Asked to rate the effectiveness of affirmative action programs, the majority (63 percent) considered them "very" or "somewhat" effective in helping lower-income Hispanics, while 77 percent considered them similarly helpful to middle-income Hispanics. For both groups, only a small portion considered the programs "very" rather than "somewhat" effective.

When the Coca-Cola survey asked how corporations could help the Hispanic community, other than through donations, the assistance most often cited was education and job-training programs, and other employment-related suggestions included providing more jobs, providing equipment and materials for job training, hiring more Hispanics, and putting more Hispanics in executive positions. When asked to identify from a list the two most important methods for aiding the Hispanic community, respondents most often selected increasing Hispanic hiring and providing education and job training programs. Thus there was a heavy emphasis on assistance which would lead to employment and therefore to economic independence.

Voter Participation

Lack of full Hispanic participation in the political process was identified as a problem in several surveys. While it is considered especially important by elected and appointed officials, the need for more Hispanic elected officials and for greater Hispanic voter participation is widely perceived.

When the HPDP study asked respondents to identify the single greatest cause of low Hispanic voting participation, more than two in five officials said it is a feeling that the individual's vote would not make a difference. Other factors considered to be very important include lack of political information, and a lack of qualified organizers and leaders. Other studies of voting participation have found that the feeling that their votes will not make a difference is a significant factor in discouraging voter registration and voter turnout among minorities and women.

The Voting Rights Act extension enjoyed strong support in the Hispanic community. The SVREP survey found that 92 percent of Mexican American citizens polled in San Antonio and 86 percent of those polled in East Los Angeles supported extension of the Act.

Immigration

Immigration remains a controversial issue within as well as outside the Hispanic community. Several national polls have indicated that many Hispanics favor immigration reform, including curbs on immigration, and support employer sanctions. But in fact, reported Hispanic attitudes about immigration vary greatly by Hispanic subgroup, geographic location, and socioeconomic status—and by the wording of the question.

Hispanic leaders tend to oppose employer sanctions and national identity cards as a means of controlling illegal immigration; for example, 76 percent of Mexican American leaders in South Texas reached in the SVREP survey oppose a national identity card, and 57 oppose any employer-sanctions legislation. In the HPDP survey of elected and appointed officials, 53 percent of Mexican Americans, 36 percent of Puerto Ricans, and 8 percent of Cuban Americans considered the problems faced by undocumented workers to be a very serious concern. On the other hand, 35 percent of Mexican Americans, 21 percent of Puerto Ricans, and 15 percent of Cuban Americans felt that problems caused by undocumented workers are a very serious concern. Puerto Ricans and Cuban Americans were found to be more supportive than Mexican Americans of proposals to make it easier for undocumented aliens to obtain work, and of legalization. Leaders who consider themselves to be "liberals" are far more likely to support legalization than those who consider themselves to be "moderates" or "conservatives."

A study of the "Chicano political elite" conducted by Rodolfo de la Garza of the University of Texas at Austin in 1979 found that only 22 percent of the leaders voiced negative views about undocumented workers. A 1982 survey of Mexican American business

owners in Austin, conducted by Gilberto Cardenas, Rodolfc de la Garza, and Niles Hansen of the University of Texas at Austin, found similarly positive views of undocumented workers. Four-fifths of the employers felt that undocumented workers take jobs no one else wants, and more than three-fourths felt they help the Austin economy. Only one-fifth felt that undocumented workers abuse welfare and other social services, while more than seven-eighths felt that undocumented workers pay their share of taxes but do not receive their share of benefits. The large majority favors legislation, and more than three-fifths of these respondents oppose employer sanctions.

A recent study conducted by faculty of the Political Science Department of Pan American University found higher levels of support for employer sanctions and other limitations on immigration among South Texas residents. In this border area, job competition was considered a serious problem by nearly four-fifths of the Mexican Americans surveyed, and a similar percentage felt that Mexicans take jobs from U.S. citizens. Mexican Americans with lower incomes and educational levels were especially likely to perceive undocumented workers as a threat. However, even in this border area, a majority of Mexican Americans surveyed did not feel that illegal immigration has a negative impact on them personally, but rather considered it a problem within the region.

There have been other surveys on the immigration issues, including one conducted by a group which favors extremely restrictive immigration policies, the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR). The FAIR survey was conducted by pollsters Peter Hart and Lance Tarrance in June and July 1983, and included Blacks and Hispanics. FAIR reported that 57 percent of Hispanics favor "tougher restrictions" on illegal immigration, that 60 percent favor employer sanctions, and that 61 percent favor increasing expenditures for the border patrol. However, FAIR's survey also found that 51 percent of Hispanics believe that restricting illegal immigration would "be bad for the economy because some jobs would not get done or employers would have to pay higher wages," that 74 percent of Hispanics favor amnesty, and that 71 percent favor free public education for the children of illegal immigrants.

A **Los Angeles Times** poll conducted in March 1983 found strong Hispanic support for legalization, with 75 percent of Hispanics in California favoring an amnesty program. However, this poll also found that a majority (57 percent) of California Hispanics oppose employer sanctions. In addition, 59 percent felt that undocumented aliens contribute more to the U.S. economy than they get from it. A majority of California Anglos and Blacks, on the other hand, reportedly favor employer sanctions, feel that the undocumented get more from the U.S. economy than they contribute to it, and oppose amnesty.

Other Issues

Hispanics are generally considered to be "liberal" on economic issues and more "conservative" or traditional on issues involving the family. Survey data indicate that Hispanic viewpoints are somewhat more complex than this generalization suggests. For example, the SVREP survey found that in San Antonio and East Los Angeles, 75 percent of Mexican Americans surveyed favor the Equal Rights Amendment. While only 17 percent felt that abortion should be legal under all circumstances, another 47 percent support it under certain circumstances. Respondents felt the government is spending too little money on most social programs, from education to health and drug abuse, and too much on space exploration and foreign aid. They were divided on their views of military spending, with about one-quarter saying the government spends too little, and about one-third saying it spends too much.

Significant subgroup differences were found by HPDP on some issues. For example, only 15 percent of Cuban elected and appointed officials favor normalized relations with Cuba, as compared with 46 percent of Mexican Americans and 55 percent of Puerto Ricans. Puerto Ricans were more likely than Mexican Americans and Cuban Americans to believe that Puerto Rico should remain a commonwealth; 50 percent of all respondents felt it should become the nation's fifty-first state.

3.
Language Use and Media Habits

According to the 1980 Census, 5 percent of Americans speak primarily Spanish at home. However, 84 percent of those aged 5-17 and 72 percent of those 18 and over who reported speaking primarily Spanish in the home indicated that they also speak English well. This does not necessarily mean full literacy in English, since the Census did not include questions on reading or writing skills in English, nor does it necessarily indicate full literacy in Spanish. Many Hispanics greatly value retention of language; for example, 81 percent of the SIN respondents considered language retention or bilingualism to be the most important aspect of Hispanic culture and tradition, as did a large majority of the respondents in the 1979 Chicano Survey. However, national research studies have suggested that Hispanic language use patterns are similar to those of other immigrant groups: the first generation speaks primarily or only Spanish, the second generation learns Spanish first but then learns English, the third generation speaks mostly English, and many members of the fourth generation have lost their Spanish. It is difficult to obtain adequate language data on Hispanics, but several recent surveys have produced useful information. The 1979 Chicano Survey reported a trend toward bilingualism. The large majority of Coca-Cola and SIN survey interviews were conducted in Spanish; most other surveys had bilingual interviewers. About half the 1979 Chicano Survey interviews were conducted primarily in Spanish.

The SIN survey found that 23 percent of its respondents know only Spanish; this included just 19 percent of Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans, and Cuban Americans, but 39 percent of other Hispanics. Only 4 percent of respondents born on the United States mainland speak only Spanish, as compared with 34 percent of those born elsewhere. Another 20 percent of respondents—and 27 percent of respondents born outside the continental United States—said they speak "enough English to get by."

The Coca-Cola survey, which focused on Hispanic businesspersons, found a particularly high rate of Spanish language use and preference. About half the respondents reportedly have no preference between Spanish and English, while 43 percent prefer Spanish and just 4 percent prefer English. Just over half (53 percent) felt Spanish is the best language for reaching the Hispanic community, while nearly half felt English is the best language for reaching opinion leaders. More than 40 percent of businesspersons prefer suppliers or corporate contacts who speak Spanish.

The SVREP survey found that only 11 percent of Mexican American citizens interviewed in East Los Angeles and San Antonio speak only English. Younger Mexican Americans were less likely to be monolingual Spanish speakers than older persons; only 6 percent of those 18-25 speak only Spanish, as compared with 22 percent of those over 65. Moreover, 79 percent of those who are monolingual in Spanish had at least one parent born outside the United States, and 81 percent had no more than eight years of schooling. A high proportion (44 percent) of Spanish monolinguals in the SVREP survey are housewives, and 67 percent have family incomes under $10,000. The SVREP study did not provide data on the percentage of persons who are bilingual versus monolingual in English.

Media Use

A frequently asked marketing question is how best to reach Hispanic consumers. Not surprisingly, the SIN study focused on Spanish versus English language media. It found that 63 percent of respondents consider Spanish language media important or very important, primarily because it is believed to help maintain Spanish language skills. Comparisons between English and Spanish language media indicated, however, that respondents are far more likely to consider English language media "modern and up to date" and "professional" than ascribe these characteristics to Spanish language media; in addi-

tion, they are somewhat more likely to feel that English language media deal with subjects that interest them, that such media include advertising for products in which they are interested, and carry advertising which captures their attention. On the other hand, Spanish language media are more likely to be favored as using language which is easy to understand.

Asked about use of Spanish versus English language media, 31 percent of respondents reported reading only English language newspapers and magazines, and 31 percent watch only English language TV, while just 20 percent listen only to English language radio. On the other hand, 17 percent watch only Spanish language television, 23 percent read only Spanish-language print media, and 25 percent listen only to Spanish language radio. Although about seven in ten respondents reported using Spanish language media at some point each week, demographics indicate that those who watch primarily Spanish language television are more likely than those who watch primarily English language TV to have been born outside the United States, to be 50 or older, and to have family incomes of less than $10,000 per year. Cuban Americans and other Hispanics are far more likely to watch primarily Spanish language television than are Mexican Americans; Puerto Ricans are approximately equally divided in their preferences.

The Coca-Cola study asked about language preferences in advertising. Of the businesspersons responding, 48 percent felt that advertising in Spanish is extremely important and another 38 percent felt it is somewhat important.

4.
Serving the Needs of Hispanics

Both the HPDP and Coca-Cola studies asked about the entities and institutions which might serve the needs of Hispanics. HPDP's elected and appointed officials were asked to rate a number of institutions; those receiving the highest mean rating were churches, Hispanic media, and Hispanic civil rights and service organizations; public schools and local governments were rated somewhat lower but still had positive ratings. Corporations and mainstream media were given the lowest ratings.

When asked what organizations were most responsive to local Hispanic community needs, Coca-Cola's businesspersons and local leaders were most likely to identify private nonprofit organizations, with local government ranked second. Major corporations and the federal government were considered least responsive. Specific organizations most often named as influential and helpful were primarily local community-based organizations or local chapters or affiliates of national organizations.

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